

Message Text

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ACTION H-03

INFO OCT-01 NEA-07 ISO-00 SS-07 NSC-06 AID-01 /025 W
-----094647 111817Z /47

R 111345Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4374

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: MAAR, SY, IS, US
SUBJ: CONGRESSMAN DERWINSKI'S CALL ON FONMIN KHADDAM,
AUGUST 10

1. SUMMARY: IN A TYPICAL FEISTY PRESENTATION, FONMIN KHADDAM TOLD CONGRESSMAN DERWINSKI AUGUST 10 THAT THE ATTITUDES OF CONGRESS, PARTICULARLY ON AID TO ISRAEL, WAS MAKING ISRAEL MORE INTRANSIGENT AND MAKING PRESIDENT CARTER'S TASK MORE DIFFICULT. KHADDAM SAID HE SAW NO EVIDENCE OF ISRAELI MODERATION OR OF US EFFORTS TO PRESS ISRAEL TOWARD PEACE. HE ADMITTED THE US POSITION HAD CHANGED AND THAT PRESIDENT CARTER WAS SINCERE AND CLAIMED THIS WAS WHY SYRIA WAS WILLING TO CONTINUE THE DIALOGUE. BUT HE CITED NEW ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS AS EVIDENCE THAT ISRAEL DOES NOT WANT PEACE. DERWINSKI PATIENTLY EXPLAINED THAT AID LEVELS ARE MORE BALANCED TODAY AND THAT THE PRESIDENT HAS THE SUPPORT OF CONGRESS AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE FOR HIS EFFORTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST. HE OPINED THAT ONCE ISRAEL RECOGNIZES THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE BEHIND THE PRESIDENT, IT WILL HAVE TO MODIFY ITS POSITION. HE FELT THAT ISRAEL DOES WANT PEACE, AND THAT BEGIN IS MORE PRACTICAL IN HIS PRIVATE VIEWS THAN HIS PUBLIC STATEMENTS WOULD INDICATE. END SUMMARY.

2. CONGRESSMAN DERWINSKI MET FONMIN KHADDAM AUGUST 10 AND ASSURED HIM CONGRESS WANTS TO COOPERATE WITH PRESIDENT
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CARTER'S EFFORTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST. KHADDAM SAID THAT IF CONGRESS MAINTAINS THE SAME ATTITUDE IT HAS IN THE PAST HE DID NOT SEE HOW THIS WOULD HELP SYRIA. THE MORE AID ISRAEL IS GIVEN, THE MORE INTRANSIGENT IT BECOMES AND THE MORE DIFFICULT IT IS FOR PRES. CARTER. DERWINSKI COMPARED THE LEVEL OF AID TO ISRAEL FOUR YEARS AGO TO CURRENT ASSISTANCE WHICH HAS LEVELED OFF. HE NOTED THAT THE US IS HELPING EGYPT

AND MAY PROVIDE ARMS TO THE SUDAN. OVERALL A BALANCE HAS BEGUN TO DEVELOP. KHADDAM OBJECTED THAT THE US IS STILL FAR FROM BALANCED IN ITS ASSISTANCE. THE QUANTITY OF ARMS PROVIDED ISRAEL HAS MADE ISRAEL'S WILLINGNESS TO MOVE TOWARDS PEACE NIL. THE US GIVES EGYPT PEPSI COLA AND GIVES ISRAEL F15'S AND F16'S. SYRIA DOES NOT CALL THIS A BALANCE. DERWINSKI SAID THAT GIVEN THE HISTORY OF THE PAST 25 YEARS ONE CANNOT EXPECT CHANGE TO COME OVER NIGHT. HOWEVER, THE US IS CONSIDERING SELLING SAUDI ARABIA F-15'S AND CONSIDERING FURTHER PURCHASES BY EGYPT. HE RECALLED THE SITUATION FOUR YEARS AGO WHEN CONGRESS HAD ADDED ITS ADVICE TO THE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE BILL CRITICIZING SYRIA FOR ITS TREATMENT OF JEWISH CITIZENS. NOW THAT CRITICISM IS MUTED AND THE US IS GIVING ECONOMIC AID TO SYRIA.

3. KHADDAM AGREED THAT THERE IS DEVELOPMENT IN THE US POSITION, BUT STILL THIS DEVELOPMENT IS LESS THAN IS REQUIRED TO BRING PRESSURE ON ISRAEL FOR MOVEMENT TOWARDS PEACE. THE SECRETARY IS DISCUSSING THE POSSIBILITY OF MODERATING THE PALESTINIAN POSITION VIS A VIS RES 242 WHILE DAYAN IS SAYING THAT ISRAEL WILL NOT ACCEPT ANY DIALOGUE WITH THE PLO OR ITS PARTICIPATION IN GENEVA EVEN IF IT RECOGNIZES 242 OR ISRAEL. WHILE THE US SAYS IT IS EXERTING EFFORTS TO ENCOURAGE A LESS INTRANSIGENT ISRAELI ATTITUDE, SYRIA SEES THE FACT OF NEW AMERICAN MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO ISRAEL. WHAT IS IT THAT WILL CONVINCE ISRAEL TO ACCEPT PEACE?
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DERWINSKI SAID THAT PRES. CARTER AND SECRETARY VANCE ARE IN A BETTER POSITION TO BRING PRESSURE TO BEAR AGAINST ISRAEL THAN WAS PRES. FORD BECAUSE CARTER ENJOYS MORE SUPPORT IN CONGRESS. THERE IS INSTINCTIVE SUPPORT FOR A NEW ADMINISTRATION DURING ITS FIRST YEAR AND THIS WILL HELP THE PRESIDENT ENCOURAGE ISRAEL TO MODIFY ITS POSITION.

4. KHADDAM SAID THAT SYRIA DOUBTS THE POSSIBILITY OF USING THE AMERICAN CARD TO BRING PRESSURE TO BEAR IN ISRAEL. UP UNTIL NOW SYRIA HAS SEEN SOME AMERICAN CIRCLES AFFECTED BY ZIONIST PRESSURE AND ELECTORAL CONSIDERATIONS. DERWINSKI COMMENTED THAT ELECTORAL PRESSURE IS NOT A FACTOR AT PRESENT BECAUSE PRES. CARTER IS FREE FROM SUCH PRESSURE FOR THREE MORE YEARS. KHADDAM POINTED OUT THAT SYRIA HAS NOT SEEN ANY RESULTS OF US EFFORTS TO EXERT PRESSURE ON ISRAEL. WHAT SYRIA CAN SEE IS ISRAEL'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF A PROGRAM FOR NEW SETTLEMENTS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. IF ISRAEL DESIRES TO MOVE TOWARDS PEACE WHY DOES IT ESTABLISH SETTLEMENTS WHEN IT KNOWS THAT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE ARABS TO AGREE TO PEACE WHILE THEIR TERRITORY REMAINS OCCUPIED?

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
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5. KHADDAM ASKED HOW DERWINSKI INTERPRETED ISRAEL'S SETTLEMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. DERWINSKI REPLIED THAT THE APPROVAL OF ALREADY ESTABLISHED SETTLEMENTS WAS A POLITICAL STEP BEGIN HAD TO TAKE. HOWEVER, IF THE NEGOTIATIONS SHOW PROGRESS ISRAEL SHOULD NOT CREATE NEW SETTLEMENTS. IF IT CONTINUES TO ESTABLISH SETTLEMENTS WHILE PROGRESS IS BEING MADE, DERWINSKI SAID HE WOULD JOIN IN THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S SKEPTICISM REGARDING THEIR INTENTIONS. KHADDAM COMMENTED THAT IF ISRAEL CONTINUES ITS POLICY OF AGRESSION THE ARABS WILL DESTROY THESE SETTLEMENTS AS WELL AS ISRAEL EVEN IF IT HAS US AND THE SOVIET UNION ON ITS SIDE. DERWINSKI AGREED THAT ISRAEL MUST MODIFY ITS POSITION. ONCE IT EVENTUALLY SEES THAT PRES. CARTER ENJOYS THE SUPPORT OF THE PEOPLE OF THE US, ISRAEL WILL COOPERATE IN THE NEGOTIATIONS. KHADDAM SAID HE FELT DERWINSKI HAD ACCURATELY REFLECTED THE SITUATION AND HE HAD NO DIFFERENCE IN THE EVALUATION OF IT. SYRIA IS CONVINCED OF THE GOOD INTENTIONS OF PRES. CARTER AND SECRETARY VANCE AND THUS IS ENCOURAGED TO CONTINUE WITH THE POLLTICAL DIALOGUE.

6. DERWINSKI SAID THAT BEGIN HAD A REPUTATION FOR BEING RIGOROUS IN HIS VIEWS AND NOW HE MUST CONVINCE HIS SKEPTICS, INCLUDING THOSE IN THE US, THAT HE IS A MAN WHO IS ABLE TO PRACTICE DIPLOMACY AND TO BE REALISTIC. DAYAN ALSO HAS ROOM FOR FLEXIBILITY AND AS A MAN OF STATURE HE IS CAPABLE OF MODIFYING HIS POSITION. KHADDAM DOUBTED THIS BUT
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SAID SYRIA MUST WAIT A WHILE TO SEE IF SUCH MODERATION PREVAILS. AT PRESENT, HOWEVER, SYRIA SEES MORE INTRANSIGENCE PARTICULARLY AFTER BEGIN REALIZED A NUMBER OF HIS OBJECTIVES ON HIS U.S. TRIP. THIS DID NOT PUT HIM IN A POSITION TO BACK DOWN FROM HIS INTRANSIGENCE. DERWINSKI SAID BEGIN HAD TAKEN A DIFFERENT LINE IN PUBLIC THAN IN PRIVATE WHEN HE MET WITH THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE. BEGIN SAID ISRAEL WAS ISOLATED IN THE WORLD AND WOULD HAVE TO MAKE ADJUSTMENTS IN HIS POSITIONS OR REMAIN ISOLATED IN THE DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY.

7. KHADDAM BELIEVED IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO WAIT FOR A WHILE TO SEE IF BEGIN RESPONDS TO US ADVICE. THEN THE US WILL EITHER REVISE ITS POSITION TOWARD ISRAEL OR THE ARAB WORLD WILL REVISE ITS POSITION TOWARD THE US. DERWINSKI OBSERVED THAT THE US HAS LESS LEVERAGE OVER ISRAEL THAN MANY PEOPLE THINK. THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY ARE BUILDING ON A POLITICAL INHERITANCE. KISSINGER'S METHOD HAD BEEN TO MOVE ISRAEL TOWARDS MAKING ADJUSTMENTS AND THIS IS THE LONG TERM US POLICY. KHADDAM POINTED OUT THAT THE US HAS STRONG CARDS VIS A VIS ISRAEL WHICH HAVE PAVED THE WAY FOR THE AMERICAN ROLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST. IF THE US HAD NO MORE LEVERAGE THAN BRITIAN OR FRANCE THEN EXPECTATIONS OF A MAJOR AMERICAN ROLE WOULD BE UNJUSTIFIED. THE US HAS GIVEN POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND MILITARY SUPPORT TO ISRAEL WHICH IF IT ELIMINATED, WOULD REDUCE ISRAEL TO ZERO. ISRAEL WOULD FACE THE CHOICE OF ECONOMIC DISINTEGRATION OR ACCEPTING PEACE.

8. DERWINSKI AGREED THAT ISRAEL FACES ECONOMIC PROBLEMS BUT THIS IS DUE TO THEIR LARGE INVESTMENT IN DEFENSE. ISRAEL HAS AN INTEREST IN PEACE BECAUSE IT DOESN'T WANT TO FACE CONTINUED TENSION. ITS ECONOMY CANNOT AFFORD IT. SINCE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IT IS IN THE ISRAELI INTEREST PERHAPS, IN TIME, THEY WILL MAKE THE NECESSARY ADJUSTMENTS IN THEIR POLICY. KHADDAM POINTED OUT THAT THERE IS NOT ONE ARAB IN A MILLION WHO WOULD FORESAKE ARAB TERRITORY OR PALESTINIAN RIGHTS. IF ONE OF THE ARAB GOVERNMENTS COMPROMISED AND ACCEPTED LESS THAN FULL RETURN OF THE TERRITORIES OR LESS THAN THE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIANS, HOW COULD THAT GOVERNMENT CONTINUE TO RULE ITS PEOPLE? PEACE MUST BE BASED ON ELIMINATING THE FEELING THAT INJUSTICE PREVAILS. ISRAEL'S REFUSAL TO WITHDRAW AND TO RECOGNIZE PALESTINIAN RIGHTS CONVINCES SYRIA THAT ISRAEL DOES NOT WANT PEACE. AS LONG AS ISRAEL HAS THE MEANS TO FIGHT AND THE OPPORTUNITY TO BLEED THE LAST CENT FROM AMERICA AND CONTINUES TO CARRY THE WIDEST STRETCH OF ARAB TERRITORY THERE WILL BE NO MOVEMENT TOWARDS PEACE.

9. DERWINSKI SAID THAT THERE MUST BE A SOLUTION TO THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM AND THAT ISRAEL MUST AGREE TO THE PRINCIPLES OF RES 242. HOWEVER, HE OBJECTED THAT ISRAEL WANTS PEACE AS MUCH AS ANYONE ELSE. THE QUESTION IS WHAT ARE THE TERMS WHICH WILL MEET THE NEEDS OF ALL THE PEOPLE IN THE AREA? KHADDAM ASKED HOW ONE COULD CONCLUDE THAT ISRAEL WANTS PEACE. DERWINSKI SAID ONE HAS TO GO BEYOND THE PRESENT PUBLIC STATEMENTS SOME OF WHICH ARE FOR DOMESTIC PURPOSES AND SOME FOR SETTING THE STAGE FOR TOUGH BARGAINING. ISRAELIS ARE NOT FOOLS. IF THEY BELIEVE PEACE IS POSSIBLE ALONG WITH SECURITY THEY WILL HAVE NO REASON TO DISAGREE.

10. KHADDAM CONCLUDED, SAYING THAT THE ARABS HAVE SPARED NO EFFORTS TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THEY WANT PEACE. THIS IS IN SPITE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF AMERICAN ASSISTANCE TO ISRAEL AND IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT WITHOUT AMERICAN ASSISTANCE ISRAEL WOULD NOT EXIST. THE ARABS HAVE ACCEPTED THE AMERICAN ROLE AND ARE GIVING IT AN OPPORTUNITY IN THE HOPES OF ATTAINING POSITIVE RESULTS. IT IS NOT JUST ISRAELI POLITICAL DECLARATIONS WHICH INFLUENCE SYRIAN VIEW OF ISRAEL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BUT THE FACTS OF DISPLACED PEOPLE, SETTLEMENTS, CHANGING THE CHARACTER OF THE LAND AND DECLARATIONS OF NEW EXPANSIONIST POLICY. THE ISRAELIS ARE NOT THE ONLY ONES WHO HAVE DOMESTIC PROBLEMS BUT THE ARABS ARE NOT EDUCATING THEIR PEOPLE TO GO TO WAR AS ISRAEL DOES. WHILE THE ARAB LEADERS TALK OF PEACE BEGIN IS TALKING OF CONTINUED OCCUPATION OF PARTS OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND OF REFUSING PALESTINIAN RIGHTS. SUCH STATEMENTS HAMPER THE MOVEMENT TOWARDS PEACE. IF IT CONTINUES ITS AGGRESSIVE POLICY ISRAEL WILL HAVE NO BETTER END THAN SOUTH AFRICA, RHODESIA, THE CRUSADERS OR THE FRENCH IN ALGERIA. NO STATE CAN CONTINUE ON THE BASIS OF AGRESSION FORESAKING HUMAN RIGHTS, JUSTICE AND THE UN CHARTER. DERWINSKI THANKED FONMIN KHADDAM FOR HIS FRANK INTERPRETATION OF THE CURRENT SITUATION.

11. THIS MESSAGE CLEARED WITH CODEL BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE. MURPHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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Review Release Event: n/a
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Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CONGRESSMAN DERWINSKI'S CALL ON FONMIN KHADDAM, AUGUST 10
TAGS: MASS, OREP, SY, IS, US, (KHADDAM, ABD AL-HALIM), (DERWINSKI, EDWARD)
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Type: TE
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